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## RELIGION AS A SCIENTIFIC STUDY.

*The Study of Religion.* By Morris Jastrow, jun., Ph.D. Contemporary Science Series. Pp. xiv + 451. (London: Walter Scott, 1901.) Price 6s.

PROF. JASTROW is chiefly known on this side of the Atlantic as an exponent of the ancient religion of the Euphrates valley. The work now before us exhibits its author not merely as an Oriental scholar, but as a scholar of wide and original thought, of keen and sympathetic insight. It is a notable book in a series which has included many notable books.

Beginning with an excellent sketch of the history of the study, Prof. Jastrow proceeds to discuss the classification of religions, the various definitions proposed for religion, and, finally, the origin of religion. These form a preliminary division, which is followed by a consideration of special aspects of the study, namely, the relation of religion to ethics, philosophy, mythology, history and culture. Four chapters devoted to certain practical aspects of the study then bring the work to a conclusion.

Anthropological students will naturally turn with the greatest interest to the chapter in which the author discusses the question of origin. They will agree with much of his criticism on the various theories put forward to account for the phenomena which we class together under the name of religion. An original revelation is now everywhere discredited. Modern science and a larger and more sympathetic view of human nature equally reject the crude theories of the philosophers of the eighteenth century. When, however, Prof. Jastrow leaves these behind and reaches Dr. Tylor and Mr. Herbert Spencer, he seems to be confounding in his criticisms two distinct things—the earliest form of religion and the origin of religion. Little consideration is required to show that the earliest form and the origin are not identical conceptions. Either the animistic theory of the former thinker or the ghost-theory of the latter may correctly present the earliest form assumed by religion, and yet the origin of religion itself may remain undiscovered. In other words, there must be behind the earliest form the possibility of life, the inchoate material ready to take shape. Religion is not a simple phenomenon, as the author rightly points out; it is a complex of thought and emotion. What we want to ascertain is what are, reduced to their lowest terms, the components of this complex, and how did they come together to make the germ of that universal characteristic of mankind—religion.

To these questions Prof. Jastrow adopts the answer of Max Müller which ascribes the origin of religion to "the perception of the infinite." Now Max Müller is a very dangerous guide to follow. He knew little of savage belief and savage custom. He derided the efforts of anthropologists to account for myth and custom, whether of the Greeks or of the Hottentots. He himself built up an elaborate system based on a study of the Vedas and philological comparisons. After it had been riddled with shell and rendered completely untenable he was still dwelling in a fool's paradise, despising his antagonists

because they were not Sanskrit scholars. And so he continued to the end. One of the last things he did was to publish a reply which exhibited his utter unconsciousness of many of the real problems about religion considered as a human phenomenon. In his solution of the origin of religion as "the perception of the infinite" he was acting like his fellow-countryman in the camel-story. He was evolving the idea of the origin of religion from the depths of his inner consciousness. He had not gone to the nearest representatives accessible to our inquiry of the primitive human being. He had not questioned them. He had not examined their modes of thought, their customs, their beliefs, with the hope of obtaining a clue to those of their hypothetical ancestor. He would no more have thought of doing so than Hobbes or Rousseau. Hence his answer to the question of the origin of religion is not the result of induction, it is "a shot." It is a shot by a very acute and accomplished man, and so perhaps in the right direction. It may miss its mark by excess, rather than by falling short, or by misdirection. But it misses its mark all the same.

The general course of human evolution is upward, not downward. We may therefore assume that the hypothetical ancestor with whom religion originated was a less developed being as to mental and moral characteristics than his descendant, the modern savage. Has any traveller or missionary ever found a modern savage with a perception of the infinite? Perception of the vague, the indefinite, the mysterious, the awful is common to the race; but perception of the infinite is beyond the power of any but the cultivated intellect of a philosopher, if even he can attain to it. Prof. Tiele, whom Prof. Jastrow quotes, tries to avoid the difficulty, while giving the weight of his distinguished authority to the general theory, by speaking of "man's original, unconscious, innate sense of infinity." And Prof. Jastrow himself admits that "such a concept as infinity is a self-contradiction on the part of a finite intellect." Yet he thinks this "need not deter us from according to it a strong influence over primitive man, and all the stronger because of his failure to grasp it clearly." Does the phrase, then, mean anything more from the pen of Prof. Jastrow (whatever Max Müller may have meant by it) than the sense of the mysterious, the awful? If it be simply a pompous way of saying this, it harmonises with what we know of the savage mind and is sufficient to satisfy Prof. Jastrow's own requirements when he says that in seeking for the origin of religion

"we must look for something which could stir [primitive man's] emotions deeply and permanently, which could arouse thoughts that would henceforth never desert him and would prompt him to certain expressions of his emotions and thoughts, so definite and striking as to become part and parcel of family or tribal tradition."

If it mean more than this it goes beyond those requirements and imputes to primitive man powers of thought and ideas incomparably beyond any yet discovered among savage races, while it ignores the practical considerations which must have immediately and profoundly influenced him.

I have dwelt upon this point because it is obviously cardinal in a work on the scientific study of religion.

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And I regret that a writer ordinarily so clear-sighted and judicious has been misled by one whose services to the study of Hindu religion and literature can hardly be overrated, and whose contributions to philology and, indeed, the science of religion it would be the veriest ingratitude not to recognise. The rest of my task is more pleasant. To discuss a subject so vast as religion in a little volume of some four hundred pages is no mean undertaking. It cannot be expected that the writer will satisfy his critics on all points. No fulness of treatment would probably enable him to do this, and where so much has to be compressed or entirely passed over it is hopeless to think of it. Besides, the questions dealt with are such that at every point he encounters prejudice and runs the risk of wounding the innermost and most sacred feelings. Among these difficulties Prof. Jastrow has tried to find his way. Owing to his charity and sympathy with the most diverse manifestations of the religious spirit, to his circumspection, to his large views of history and to his dispassionate judgment, he has, on the whole, succeeded admirably. His opening chapter on the history of the study, and those on religion and history and religion and culture, display in full measure all the qualities referred to. The practical suggestions contained in the final section deserve careful consideration. In the chapter on the study of the sources the standard is fixed very high. It is well that it should be so. But it is to be observed that the exhaustive study demanded for the religion to which the student proposes to dedicate himself will, in the case of most students, leave but little time for that acquaintance which the writer demands, and rightly demands, with other religions.

"In order to understand one religion," he says, "we must be acquainted with more than one. Religions with literatures differ far more from one another than those which possess none. Hence it is not sufficient to study merely one religion direct from the sources."

By this expression the author means the study of the religious literature in the original tongue. He does not mention, though his illustration of the Hebrew word *goel* evidently implies, a study of the history and culture of the people concerned outside their religion. To continue the quotation:—

"Studying two in this way may be set down as a minimum for acquiring that firmness of method and keenness of judgment needed for the chief problem of religious research—the interpretation of facts. This does not imply that the two are to be cultivated with equal intensity, or that the entire field of both must be covered, but only that in addition to the one religion which forms one's special object of research, one should be able to acquire a sufficient knowledge of a second religion, direct from its sources, as to be able to penetrate into the spirit of that religion."

The ideal is excellent. And yet I am not sure that a more important service may not sometimes be rendered to the study of a religion by one who is ignorant even of the original language, if he be able to bring to bear upon a study of first-rate translations a wide ethnographical knowledge, and therefore to compare the practices of totally different races and cultures. How, for example, would a study of the sources of Hebrew and Egyptian religions, or Hebrew and Hindu religions, even

if we add Mohammedanism and Zoroastrianism, enable us to solve the origin and meaning of the rite of circumcision? Robertson Smith could never have written his "Religion of the Semites" if he had been *simply* a student, from the sources, of the Hebrew and Arab religions. A general acquaintance with the results of anthropological study of savage peoples was of more value to him than the study of the literatures of half-a-dozen civilised religions would have been.

I have no space to do more than refer to the cogent arguments with which the author enforces the need for the scientific study of religion in higher education generally, and especially in mission-colleges, or to his exposition of the utility of museums in the study. These chapters, not less than the earlier parts of the book, deserve to be carefully read. The appendices illustrate them by showing actual courses of lectures delivered at the École des Hautes Études at Paris, and the arrangement of the Musée Guimet, which was specially formed to aid the study of religion. To guide the student, a bibliography is added of a remarkably catholic character.

E. SIDNEY HARTLAND.

#### CHEMISTRY FOR COLLEGES.

*A College Text-Book of Chemistry.* By Ira Remsen. Pp. xx+689. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1901.) Price 8s. 6d. net.

THIS book is intended to fill a place between the "Introduction to the Study of Chemistry" and the "Inorganic Chemistry" by the same author. The style and plan of the book may be estimated from the author's remark in the preface, where he expresses the opinion that "The time has not yet come for the abandonment of the study of elements and their compounds in what some are pleased to call the old-fashioned way." Intended, as its name implies, for the use of colleges, the book differs in no essential particulars from other text-books of the same scope. The arrangement adopted for the treatment of the subject is one that has in more recent years repeatedly appeared, a few typical elements and their compounds being studied in some detail in the earlier chapters, and the main bulk of the subject subsequently dealt with from the standpoint of the periodic law. Each descriptive chapter is followed by a number of experiments to be carried out by the student, whose power of observation is aided and developed by the manner in which many suggestive questions are asked concerning each experiment. A number of chapters throughout the book are devoted to a discussion of the principles of theoretical chemistry, and it is in reading these that we are more particularly struck with the loose and inaccurate expressions that are more or less characteristic of the book. Thus it is not the best definition of energy to say that it is "that which causes change in matter." Again, in discussing chemical changes, the student is told to "consider the changes included under the head of fire." Is not fire rather a phenomenon accompanying these changes? In discussing the law of conservation of energy the incomplete statement is made that "from a certain amount of heat we can get a certain amount of motion, and that for a